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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 00514

STATE FOR EUR/RPM. SECDEF FOR OASD/ISA AND OUSDR&E/IP.

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCON, NATO, MILI, AWACS
SUBJECT: NATO AWACS - ITALIAN POSITION

REF: USNATO 411 DTG 131957ZJAN78

SUMMARY: THE ITALIAN OFFER OF A $1M TOTAL CONTRIBUTION TO NATO AWACS RESULTS IN A $104M SHORTFALL WHICH JEOPARDIZES THE PROGRAM AND MAY CAUSE NATO TO SETTLE FOR A 16 AIRCRAFT FORCE. WE RECOMMEND THAT SECRETARY BROWN WRITE MINISTER RUFFINI TO EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR A MORE REASONABLE ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO ENSURE THE NATO-WIDE NATURE OF THE PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE JUST-COMPLETED NATO AWACS NATIONAL EXPERTS MEETING (REFTEL) SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES PUSHED HARD ON THE ITALIANS TO RECOMMEND TO ROME A LARGER ITALIAN SHARE IN AWACS. ITALIAN REPS PLEDGED TO REPORT FULLY, BUT ARGUED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT SINCE MINISTER RUFFINI HAD TOLD NATO THE $1M WAS ALL ITALY COULD AFFORD, THEY COULD HARDLY GO AGAINST THEIR MINISTER. OTHER REPS DID NOT ACCEPT THE ITALIAN POSITION, IN PARTICULAR THE CANADIAN REP POINTED OUT THE NEAR EQUALITY OF ITALIAN AND CANADIAN GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCTS AND ASKED HOW CANADA COULD BE EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE $175M IF ITALY CONTRIBUTED NEARLY NOTHING. NO REPRESENTATIVE WAS

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WILLING TO AGREE TO A HIGHER SHARE TO HELP MAKE UP THE $104M ITALIAN SHORTFALL.

2. NATIONAL EXPERTS AGREED THAT BARRING A SUBSTANTIAL FRENCH SUBSCRIPTION OR AN INCREASE IN THE ITALIAN SHARE, NATO WILL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR A 16 AIRCRAFT FORCE. THIS IS ASSUMING THAT THE CANADIANS AND THE GERMANS, WHO HAVE ALWAYS CALLED FOR A FULL NATO FORCE, WILL BE ABLE TO SELL THEIR SHARES TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS AND PARLIAMENTS, AND ASSUMING THAT FLANK NATIONS SUCH AS NORWAY AND TURKEY WILL SETTLE FOR THE SMALLER FORCE.

3. ON THE MARGINS OF THE NATIONAL EXPERTS MEETING, WE LEARNED THAT ITALIAN REPS ARE RELUCTANT TO PRESS ROME, PARTIALLY BECAUSE NO DEFENSE MINISTER HAS OBJECTED TO RUFFINI'S OFFER. OUR ITALIAN CONTACT IMPLIED THAT RUFFINI BELIEVES ALLIES ARE NOT DISSATISFIED WITH THE OFFER -- AT LEAST NOT DISSATISFIED ENOUGH TO COMPLAIN.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT A LETTER TO RUFFINI FROM SECRETARY BROWN IS THE BEST WAY TO DISABUSE THE ITALIANS OF ANY THOUGHT WE ARE NOT CONCERNED OVER THEIR VERY LIMITED CONTRIBUTION, EXPLAINING THAT, WHILE WE RECOGNIZE ITALY'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, THE NEED TO HAVE THIS SYSTEM AS A TRUELY NATO-WIDE SYSTEM, CALLS FOR ITALY TO TRY HARDER. UNLESS ITALY CAN CONTRIBUTE A MORE REASONABLE SHARE -- CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE REASONABLE IN CONSIDERATION OF THE BENEFIT ITALY WILL RECEIVE AND ITALY'S POSITION IN THE ALLIANCE -- NATO WILL HAVE TO REDUCE FORCE SIZE TO 16 AIRCRAFT. SUCH A REDUCTION MAY CAUSE FURTHER DEFECTIONS AND A POSSIBLE COLLAPSE OF THE ENTIRE PROGRAM.

5. WE ALSO RECOMMEND CONSIDERATION OF LETTERS FROM SECRETARY BROWN TO MODS DANSON AND LEBER, AND PERHAPS TO OTHERS SUCH AS SYG LUNS, ASKING THEM TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM WITH THE ITALIANS.

6. WE BELIEVE THE NATO AWACS PROGRAM IS WITHIN REACH IF SUCH DIFFICULT PROBLEMS AS THIS ITALIAN POSITION CAN BE SOLVED. HOWEVER, WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THIS IS A PARTICULARLY DELICATE AND DIFFICULT TIME FOR RAISING SUCH AN ISSUE WITH ITALIANS, AND THAT WE WILL NEED TO UNDERTAKE THE PROPOSED APPROACH WITH SPECIAL CARE.

7. WE BELIEVE THIS APPROACH IS CONSISTENT WITH DISCUSSIONS REFERENCED IN ROME 856. GLITMAN

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